

**Testimony to House of Representative Energy and Technology Committee**  
**Supporting Renewable Energy**  
**Behalf of The National Wildlife Federation**  
**September 17, 2013**

Good morning, thank you Chairman Nesbitt for hosting today's hearing on renewable energy. My name is Sarah Mullkoff and I work on Energy and Climate Policy at the National Wildlife Federation out of our Great Lakes Regional Center in Ann Arbor. We cover numerous conservation topics across a six-state region in the Midwest. With 205,000 members and supporters in Michigan, and over four million nationally, we are the largest member-supported conservation organization in the United States and are committed to inspiring Americans to protect wildlife for our children's future.

**The National Wildlife Federation is committed to expanding Michigan's renewable energy and energy efficiency laws in order to help prevent climate change – which we believe is the single greatest threat to wildlife.**

Last fall, NWF conducted a poll of 800 hunters and anglers on various conservation issues. Anglers and hunters believe that global warming is occurring and they believe we have a moral responsibility to confront global climate change to protect our children's future. And they overwhelmingly believe that the economy can be strengthened and jobs created by investing in renewable energy while reducing air pollution, with a majority of 72% in support including strong bi-partisanship. Additionally, 69 percent agree the U.S. should reduce its carbon emissions that contribute to warming temperatures which threaten fish and wildlife habitat.

Fishing, hunting, and wildlife watching are not just recreational pastimes, they are also major contributors to the Michigan economy. In 2011, over 2.5 million sportsmen and women and wildlife enthusiasts participated in wildlife associated activities in Michigan, including over 1.56 million anglers. In the same year, anglers alone had a significant contribution to the Michigan economy by spending \$2.41 billion in the state.

To protect wildlife from negative effects of climate change we must take action to replace much of our fossil fuel usage with clean renewable energy sources and increased energy efficiency. We support reduction of Michigan's reliance on coal-burning power plants and transitioning to greater renewable energy and energy efficiency to fulfill our energy needs. This action will ultimately protect human health while also protecting wildlife and their habitats.

Of particular concern is the potential for climate change to exacerbate environmental threats such as rising lake temperatures. In Lake Superior for example, summer surface temperatures have increased 4.5 degrees Fahrenheit since 1980. This increase allows the sea lamprey a longer growing season, putting native species at risk due to food scarcity. As Great Lakes temperatures rise, they become more suitable for warm-water fish like smallmouth bass and bluegill, but less suitable for cool and cold-water species such as northern pike and whitefish, respectively. They also force out native species like cattails, consequently forcing native waterfowl species out.

**Commercial fishing and sport fishing for recreation are each deeply important to Michigan's economy and we have a significant opportunity to curb dangers of increased carbon pollution harming fish by investing in clean, renewable energy sources.**

Our reliance on nonrenewable power sources (such as coal plants) has numerous impacts on Michigan fish and wildlife. Currently, Michigan gets more than 50% of its electricity from coal, all of which is imported from other states thereby exporting \$1.2 million of our citizens' earnings away.

Mercury remains a primary concern in Michigan for wildlife, especially in respect to ongoing emissions and the dependence on coal-burning plants. This is leading to increased mercury deposits; 50% of the mercury deposits in the Great Lakes come from sources within 60 miles of the lake. Due to effects of bioaccumulation of mercury consumption up the food chain, wildlife are at continued risk from elevated exposures in the Great Lakes region. Each unit of dirty energy replaced by wind, solar or energy efficiency means a cleaner, healthier habitat for our wildlife and the rest of Michigan's residents.

NWF believes increased renewable energy will lead to improved habitat for wildlife, but also acknowledges the risks faced by some wildlife in some installations. It is critical to seek out public input early and ensure proper wildlife and habitat precautions are considered. Siting in Michigan has been done correctly in many locations that are now served by wind farms. NWF is working to ensure that renewable energy production and transmission lines are properly sited away from environmentally critical areas to minimize potential effects on fish and wildlife.

Clean energy investments are the best solution for minimizing harmful impacts to wildlife. I strongly encourage the legislature to move forward with policy which advances Michigan's renewable energy and energy efficiency standards.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss our comments further, please do not hesitate to contact me at [mullkoffs@nwf.org](mailto:mullkoffs@nwf.org) or 248-739-0489. Thank you.